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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Joint written statement* submitted by the Women's Federation for World Peace International, Soroptimist International, International Alliance of Women, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, non-governmental organizations in general consultative status and the Graduate Women International, Tandem Project, The, Mothers Legacy Project, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[22 August 2018]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

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Human Rights: Women and Trade Policy**

This statement is submitted by Women's Federation for World Peace International, together with Graduate Women International, Soroptimist International, International Alliance of Women, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, Pan Pacific and Southeast Asia Women's Association of Thailand, Tandem Project, Mother's Legacy Project; international NGO's all committed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These goals hold little hope of success if more dramatic measures are not taken to advance opportunities for women and girls as movers and leaders in society – and importantly, their economic empowerment and access to education and knowledge.

Trade provides tremendous potential towards growth and prosperity. However, unethical trade, trade which does not respect the parameters laid down by international frameworks and conventions, can and is having a negative impact on human rights, and especially on women's rights. Women and marginalised or excluded communities, as consumers, workers or entrepreneurs, are disproportionately affected by unethical trade and policies which do not respect the criteria on which they were established.

In global trade negotiations, WTO, Bilateral trade agreements, FTAs, GSP, EBA, GSP+ etc , marginalised communities, the informal sector and women's voices are often excluded from policy-negotiations, and even from impact assessments or safe-guard clauses. This leaves women and those at risk from poverty without any protection or livelihood security and continues the demise of women's rights in general.

Furthermore, most countries now focus their trade policy on liberalisation and open-markets, assuming these macro-economic policies are "gender neutral." However, experts and activists, such as the Women's Economic and Social Think Tank (WESTT) have warned that failing to recognise, and work to address, the disproportionate affect of trade liberalisation policies on women could have lasting effects on economies, and on society as a whole. Trade benefit programs that are currently in place must be effectively implemented so as to best serve disenfranchised groups. As well, international conventions on women's rights, such as CEDAW must be respected in all trade agreements.

Recommendations

1. CEDAW must be respected and implemented by all countries in all trade negotiations. Immediate suspension of trade agreements, trade subsidies or preferential tariffs must be enforced where CEDAW is not being respected or implemented.

2. UN and ILO conventions on equal treatment, decent work and equal pay for equal work, must be implemented and countries who fail to comply with, or report, on such Conventions should have their trade agreements suspended ahead of an investigation into breaches of the Convention.

3. Trade policy is not gender neutral and women must be included equally in all trade discussions, especially as trade imbalances disproportionately affect the informal sector where women are mainly employed and self-employed.

**Pan Pacific and Southeast Asia Women's Association of Thailand, NGO without consultative status, also shares the views expressed in this statement.